

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 03240 020130Z

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO USINFO WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

SECSTATE WASHDC 3734

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 03240

FOR IOR, IBS, IPS

EO 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: ASEAN CONFERENCE MEDIA COMMENT

1 THE DOMINION, WELLINGTON'S MORNING PAPER, AUGUST 2, COMMENTED EDITORIALY ON THE ASEAN CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR. THIS WAS A LEAD-IN TO A 16-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS PREPARED BY ITS POLITICAL COLUMNIST, W. P. REEVES, AFTER A SPECIAL VISIT TO THE FIVE NATIONS.

2 UNDER THE HEADING, "NEW ZEALAND'S CHANCES WITH ASEAN," THE EDITORIAL COMMENTED THAT ASEAN'S INVITATION TO PRIME MINISTER MULDOON TO ATTEND THE POST-SUMMIT GATHERING WAS A COMPLIMENT AND A CHALLENGE.

3 "NEW ZEALAND CAN IGNORE THE PACE OF EVENTS IN THIS
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BURDEONING REGION...ONLY AT SOME RISK TO ITS FUTURE INTERNATIONAL STATUS AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING."

4 AFTER DESCRIBING ASEAN AS AN "EXCITING REGIONAL EXPERIMENT," THE EDITORIAL SAYS THAT IT HOPES NEW ZEALAND WILL PLAY A BRAVER ROLE IN AN AREA OF ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE AND SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES OPENING

TO IT.

5 "NEW ZEALAND STARTS FROM A POSITION OF ADVANTAGE. GOODWILL IS ENCOUNTERED THROUGHOUT THE REGION....IN ANY REVIEW OF THE WORLD ASEAN INEVITABLY MAKES MENTION OF ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH NEW ZEALAND. ITS CONTACTS WITH JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA MIGHT BE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT IN AN ECONOMIC SENSE BECAUSE OF THE SCALE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS, BUT ASEAN PRESERVES A CAUTIOUS, IF NOT SCEPTICAL, ATTITUDE TOWARDS THESE GIANTS, A STANCE HARDENED BY THE TIGHT PROTECTIONIST POLICIES, BOTH TOKYO AND CANBERRA ARE PURSUING."

6 WHEN MENTIONING THAT MR MULDOON WILL NO DOUBT BE ASKED TO LIBERALISE NEW ZEALAND'S TRADE, TOO, THE EDITORIAL ADDS THAT THE DANGER IS THAT IF NEW ZEALAND WAITS TOO LONG IT COULD FIND OPPORTUNITIES PRE-EMPTED, AS IS ALREADY THE CASE WITH DANISH DAIRY PRODUCTS.

7 THE EDITORIAL ASKS IF NEW ZEALAND IS CONCENTRATING TOO MUCH ON A REARGUARD ACTION IN EUROPEON "A CAUSE WE ALL KNOW IN OUR HEARTS TO BE LOST AT THE EXPENSE OF MORE ENTERPRISING CAMPAIGNS TO FIND BUYERS ELSEWHERE.

8 "FREE TRADE IS AN ARTICLE OF ASEAN'S FAITH. IF ITS MEMBERS ENCOUNTER CRIPPLING BARRIERS IT WILL GO DOWN.
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NEW ZEALAND HAS A VESTED INTEREST IN ITS SURVIVAL. THIS IS NOT ONLY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. ASEAN WAS CONCEIVED AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF SHIFTING INTERNATIONAL REALITIES. THE FALL OF VIETNAM REPRESENTED THE FINAL FAILURE OF THE OLD DULLES DOCTRINE OF CONTAINMENT.

9 "IF THE REGION WAS TO SURVIVE IN PEACE AND PROSPER THE SEPARATE NATIONS REALISED, THEY HAD TO FILL THE VACUUM THEIR WEAKNESS CREATED, NOT BY IMPORTED MILITARY MIGHT, BUT BY SELF RELIANCE BUILT ON ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LOT OF ALL THEIR PEOPLES."

10 IN A FOREWORD TO THE SUPPLEMENT PRIME MINISTER MULDOON COMMENTS: "WE IN NEW ZEALAND SEE CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGE IN HAVING A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN. WE, LIKE THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, FACE THE SAME PROTECTIONIST BARRIERS FOR OUR PRIMARY AND MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS. IN OUR CASE, TOO, WE HAVE A HIGH BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT AND A STANDARD OF LIVING WHICH CONTINUES TO FALL. WE HAVE, THEREFORE EVERY REASON TO ACT IN CONCERT WITH THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY ASEAN." ANDERSON

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